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2016

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Claiborne Pell

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Recommended Citation

Pell, Claiborne, "Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 24" (2016). *Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996)*. Paper 55.
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STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. President, an amendment prohibiting the Arts Endowment from funding any form of performance art suffers from the same problems as most such general and overbroad content restrictions. Mr. President, if we eliminated entire cultural programs every time we identified a single controversial performance or artwork, we would in short order cease to fund arts and culture altogether. Should we abolish the design arts program if the Endowment ever contributes to the design of a controversial building, or eradicate the entire literature program if the Endowment assists an author who later writes a book the content of which we do not approve? Mr. President, the vast majority of Endowment funds for performance art go to the support of mainstream programs -- for mime, storytelling, puppeteers and balladeers, for clowns and comedy -- which bring joy to children and young people around the country. Most performance art funded by the Endowment is interesting and engrossing, generating a great deal of involvement by the audience in the performance. While I do not agree with the controversial program that was sponsored by the Walker Institute, eliminating a program which has in the main been a great success is neither the best thing for the Endowment nor for cultural development in the nation.